

II.—Notes on some of the Birds of Grand Cayman,
West Indies. By T. M. SAVAGE ENGLISH.

(Plate I.)

AN account of the birds of the Cayman Islands was given by Mr. P. R. Lowe in 'The Ibis' (1911, pp. 137-161), his list comprising 75 species. To this number the present writer during a residence of three years, one of them in the south-west and the other two in the north of Grand Cayman, the largest and most westerly island of the group, has been able to add 12, of which 4 (or 5) are resident and 2 (or 3) summer visitors breeding in the island.

These new birds are :—

<i>Sterna antillarum.</i>	<i>Pelecanus fuscus.</i>
<i>Catotrophorus semipalmatus.</i>	<i>Pandion haliaëtus.</i>
<i>Himantopus mexicanus.</i>	<i>Strix flammea.</i>
<i>Fulica americana.</i>	<i>Chordeiles virginianus.</i>
<i>Nomonyx dominicus.</i>	<i>Chordeiles minor.</i>
<i>Dendrocyena arborea.</i>	<i>Cotyle riparia.</i>

Against these additions to the Cayman avifauna a familiar acquaintance with two species, in the north of the island, where they are perhaps as common as Jays are in the woods of the south of England, would tend to cast some doubt on their right to specific rank.

These two are—*Amazona caymanensis* and *Icterus bairdi*.

The Parrot *Amazona caymanensis* seems to be smaller than the Cuban bird, as might perhaps be expected in the case of a race inhabiting a small island (cf. *Vanessa urticae* from the Isle of Man, Shetland ponies, &c.), but as regards colour, its variability is quite sufficient to enable a number kept in captivity to be easily distinguished individually by their colouring—in most cases by the colouring of their foreheads. Those with white foreheads are supposed by the islanders to be hen birds and useless as talkers, those which have brightly coloured foreheads being males and capable of learning. This was certainly the case with the parrots kept by the

writer—while they were in their native land. Two of these (males of 1911 and 1912) are at present (September 1915) at the Zoological Gardens, London, and since their departure from Cayman, whether it be owing to change of climate or of food, or to other circumstances unknown, they have changed in colour from a bright, almost golden green to quite a dark and far duller hue, while their foreheads have lost almost all their yellow feathers and most of their red ones and have become more or less white. This dull green plumage is a reversion to their immature condition, but at that time they have not developed much colouring other than green on their foreheads.

Icterus bairdi, one of the Troupials, is by no means uncommon in the north of Grand Cayman and is usually seen in small parties of five or six birds, hunting for food in the crowns of Coccoanut and *Thrinax* palm trees. These parties are presumably families, for, though three years was not long enough to enable the writer to find a nest, there can be but little doubt as to this bird's breeding somewhere on the island, and as a rule various hues, ranging from bright golden yellow (? *Icterus bairdi*) to dull olive (? *Icterus leucopteryx*), are represented in any one of them. It was in this same island of Grand Cayman that a married couple, having described themselves as "coloured" at the 1911 census, put down their offspring as "white" and "black," presumably according as they were fairer or darker than themselves.

The four resident birds which are not on Mr. Lowe's list are:—

Catotrophorus semipalmatus.

Dendrocycna arborea.

Nomonyx dominicus.

Strix flammea.

Himantopus mexicanus may possibly be resident, while *Sterna antillarum* and *Chordeiles virginianus* are summer visitors breeding in the island.

Catotrophorus semipalmatus is a fairly common resident in the north of Grand Cayman and breeds there. The islanders call it "Laughing Jackass," and the reason for the name is apparent during the breeding-season, when the noise it makes

is deafening as it flies round an intruder on its domain, occasionally settling for a short time on a bare limb of some small tree or on the ground, but hardly ceasing its harsh double note until the unwelcome visitor is out of sight.

A nest of this bird came under observation in June 1913; it was on a dry sandbank, scantily covered by grass and other low-growing maritime vegetation, which was largely occupied by a colony of *Sterna antillarum*. The nest was merely a slight depression in the sand partly shaded by a small plant of Sea-Rocket (*Cakile maritima*); it contained four eggs of somewhat "plover" type and arranged in the nest after the manner of these birds, their colour being very like that of the eggs of the Lesser Blackbacked Gull and their size 2.12 x 1.3 inches. When first found, the sitting bird was pressed closely to the ground with her neck and head stretched out, and was at first taken to be a dead fish. She allowed herself to be touched without moving, and was left sitting on the 15th of June. On the 22nd the first egg had evidently just hatched, and on this occasion the parent birds were exceedingly noisy.

The young one, except for the length of the beak, might have been a young Herring-Gull. Its feet were slightly webbed, and it gave no sign of being able to use them, lying quite passively even when handled. On the 25th of June there was no sign of old birds or young except two addled eggs.

Nomonyx dominicus seems to be more or less abundant throughout the year, on the secluded ponds of salt water which are frequent among the tall Black Mangrove (*Avicennia*) woods in the north of Grand Cayman; it most probably breeds somewhere near them—very possibly among the dense thickets of Red Mangrove (*Rhizophora*), by which they are mostly surrounded. Anyone who has ever been among Red Mangroves will appreciate the difficulty of finding the nest of a diving bird among them—except by a fortunate chance which never came to the writer.

Most of the resident birds of Grand Cayman are remarkably fearless of man, very much as robins are in

Europe, but these ducks are more wary, and when their pond is approached generally make their first appearance in the middle of it, having dived at the sight or sound of the intruder and, if near the shore, found their way under water to what they think is a safer place. When at rest they float very much as most waterfowl do, the water-line being in about its usual place, but when swimming they are almost always deeply submerged, and if approaching or receding from the observer, seem to have a relatively enormous "beam." Of course this effect may be only due to the very low elevation of the bird's back above the water. Their method of diving is interesting. It has the appearance of being done without the movement of a muscle, just as if the bird were a leaking vessel which was going down on an even keel. This downward progress is often interrupted, when just the head, the neck, and the upper part of the upstanding tail are showing above the surface, or a little later, when only the head and part of the neck, which is habitually kept stiffly upright (as is the tail), are visible. In either of these positions the bird seems able to rest as well as to swim at some speed.

Nomonyx dominicus has at least two calls, one of them very like the clucking of a hen to her chickens, and the other more reminiscent of a short note from a motor-horn.

Dendrocycna arborea is by no means uncommon, and breeds in various parts of the south and south-west of Grand Cayman, but apparently not in the north, though it occurs there not infrequently. Its nest and eggs are described as being "exactly like a hen's," the nest, such as it is, being made mostly of grass and similar material and apparently not lined with down. It seems to be as a rule well hidden in some dry place among bushes. The ducklings in colour and general appearance are very like those of the darker type of the domestic duck.

This bird is readily tamed. Shortly before leaving the island, the writer tried to give their liberty to two which had been brought up from the duckling stage, but after having been at large for several weeks they flew back to

their accustomed quarters, waited about, calling vigorously, until they were let in, and could not be induced to leave the regular supply of food a second time.

Despite its small size, this duck will do its best to take entire charge of a poultry-yard, waking up indignantly to join in any dispute among the fowls. It sleeps as a rule through the day, and at night is more to be relied on as a "watch" than most dogs.

In its wild state it goes to its feeding grounds at dusk, giving its whistling call as it flies, and seems to wander a good deal during the night, as it by no means infrequently alights, at all sorts of hours and often with a resounding noise, on one of the galvanized iron roofs usual in Cayman, evidently mistaking it for water.

It seems to be mainly vegetarian, though it is very fond of tadpoles and similar soft animal food. Anything at all hard is invariably dipped into water and well bruised and pounded before being eaten.

Strix flammea which, with the exception of the Osprey, is the only bird of prey living in or regularly visiting Grand Cayman, is decidedly one of the rarer birds of the island. The writer only knows of the existence of two pairs, one of which (and probably the other as well) breeds in a hollow tree, and he has only heard of one other, though rats (*Mus alexandrinus*) and mice (*Mus musculus*) abound. These were in all probability first imported at least as long ago as the settlement of the island in the early part of the 18th century, and the rats at all events are quite at home in its wildest parts, but by reason of the land-crabs, they seem to have almost lost the art of burrowing and spend most of their lives in the trees—a state of things which presumably does not suit *Strix flammea*.

Himantopus mexicanus is said to be a resident, but the writer personally has only seen it in the summer and never succeeded in finding its nest. It probably breeds in suitable places all over the island, and certainly does so in the southwest, where *Dendrocycna arborea* also seems to have its headquarters and where, except after very prolonged dry

weather, fresh-water ponds are to be found, where, too, the large land-crabs are least abundant. In Grand Cayman this bird nests in May, and in the later summer months seems to wander about the island in family-parties.

Sterna antillarum does not seem to come to Grand Cayman except for the purpose of breeding, and then is only present in comparatively small numbers—about 150 birds and fewer than 40 nests with eggs or young was the maximum at any one time in the only colony of which the writer has knowledge, and there were very seldom so many as this. The islanders call them “egg-birds,” and the name perhaps gives one of the reasons why there are not more of them. June seems to be their usual month for nesting, but in 1913 a succession of misfortunes, due to cats (*Felis domestica* run wild) and land-crabs, ended early in August in an abnormally high tide washing away all the surviving eggs and all the young ones except eight, which were accounted for by a cat the following night. Some of the old birds stayed about until the middle of the month, but did not try to nest again. This may have been the end of the colony, particularly as their sandbank was showing signs of being rapidly washed away.

This bird's nests are sometimes more or less made of dry seaweed and similar material, but usually they are nothing more than shallow pits scratched in the sand just before the laying of the first egg, which sometimes can be seen lying on sand which is still moist, though the surface of the sand surrounding the nest may be perfectly dry.

Only two eggs seem to be laid, in size $1\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ inches, and in ground-colour varying from light yellowish-brown or grey to nearly white. Their spots are often arranged spirally and are usually dark brown or chestnut, while they vary considerably in size and number. One type of egg has a nearly white ground-colour with a few—perhaps two or three, perhaps only one—large, very dark brown, almost black, irregular blotches, and unspotted eggs occur.

The downy young are as a rule of various shades of light grey above, with numerous small dark, though not very

clearly defined spots, and white beneath. Another type is of various shades of yellowish-grey and is unspotted, but, having only been noticed in the nest, this may perhaps be the first stage after hatching, and may develop spots later. Their beaks are horn-coloured with dark tips, and their feet and legs are pink. They have a most remarkable resemblance to the pebbles of weathered coral which abound on every West Indian beach.

Chordeiles virginianus is a very abundant spring and autumn migrant, some staying throughout the summer and breeding along the western shore of the island, while an occasional individual may be found during the winter months. Quite possibly this bird breeds in other parts of Grand Cayman than the west, but it does not seem to do so in the north, and this is very probably due to the abundance there of the large land-crab (*Cardisoma guanhumii*), which is at least as deadly an enemy to any bird nesting on or near the ground, as the imported mongoose has been found to be in Jamaica. The place where they undoubtedly do breed is a flat but rugged expanse of coral-rock, nearly bare of vegetation, and about six to ten feet above sea-level, stretching for some miles south from Georgetown, the largest settlement in the Cayman Islands, between the sea and a road along which there are houses and cultivation—consequently very few crabs. Walking over this rock, one frequently puts up “nighthawks,” and on the 30th of May, 1911, one of these left a lately hatched young one. No sign could be found of another young one or egg.

The other five additions to Grand Cayman’s birds do not appear to breed there. They are :—

Fulica americana.

Chordeiles minor.

Pelecanus fuscus.

Cotyle riparia.

Pandion haliaëtus.

Fulica americana is frequent enough to be known to the islanders as the “Diving Widgeon” (the Cayman “Coot” is *Gallinula galeata*), but was only seen twice by the writer—in November and December, 1913; and on both occasions as

a corpse thrown up on the beach after heavy weather from the north-east. It is just possible that this bird may be a resident in other parts of Grand Cayman than the north.

Pelecanus fuscus appears occasionally at almost any season of the year, but does not ever seem to stay for more than a day or two.

Pandion haliaëtus is represented in Grand Cayman by a very small number of individuals, though at least one pair of them seem to be regular winter visitors, arriving in September and leaving in March.

Chordeiles minor was only seen on one occasion. This was during the evening of the 16th of May, 1911, when seven or eight of them, noticeable by reason of their size, were flying about in company with a number of the larger *Chordeiles virginianus*.

Cotyle riparia is likely to be only a casual visitor. Two of them were flying about over water during the morning of the 26th of March, 1912.

In addition to the twelve species already mentioned not previously recorded from Grand Cayman, I noticed on the 22nd of March, 1912, just after sunset a large bird, which, in any part of tropical America known to be inhabited by it would, without hesitation, have been taken to be *Cathartes aura*, circling overhead at a great height, and as the islanders say that "John Crows" occasionally appear over the island, this bird may have some claim to a place in the Cayman avifauna.

In November 1912, during and after some heavy weather, a large dark-coloured Tern was to be seen, which may or may not have been *Sterna fuliginosa*; and on the 1st of May, 1913, a flock of six birds about the size of Starlings was observed flying from tree to tree, of which four had stout dark beaks, dark grey or black rather variegated backs, conspicuous straw-coloured napes, and were black underneath, while the other two resembled the female house-sparrow in colour. From this description Mr. Lowe identifies these as *Dolichonyx oryzivora*. They were only seen on this one occasion.

The identification of the foregoing birds is of course

doubtful, but this does not apply to *Phaëton flavirostris*, which is a common enough sight during most voyages over the seas surrounding Grand Cayman and the Lesser Caymans, 60 miles to the north-east, so that it might fairly be included among the birds of the Cayman Islands. It does not, however, seem to show itself very near the land.

Mr. Lowe is quite correct in his conjecture that *Hirundo erythrogaster* is only a spring and autumn bird-of-passage in the Caymans. Particularly in autumn it is sometimes present in hundreds, but seems to take only a few days' rest before going on. One of these Swallows roosted over the door of the writer's house on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of October, 1912, and these three nights may perhaps have been the time of its stay in the island.

Swallows were present, in 1911, between the 19th of April and the 20th of May, and between the 17th of August and the 19th of October; in 1912, between the 11th of April and the 11th of May, and between the 25th of August and the 20th of October; in 1913, between the 11th of April and the 13th of May, and between the 6th of September and the 11th of October. At times, stray individuals appear during both the summer and winter months, but no attempt at nesting ever seems to be made.

Among the birds peculiar to the island whose nests are unknown to the writer, are *Mimocichla ravid*a and *Holoquiscalus caymanensis*.

*Mimocichla ravid*a is one of the rarest, or at all events most elusive, of the birds of Grand Cayman, and escaped the writer's notice during more than two years spent among its supposed haunts. More than this, it seems to be unknown to the islanders.

In this connection a word of warning to any ornithologist, who may think of going out to these or to similar islands, may not be out of place. The Cayman islanders, those of them, that is to say, who have escaped the worst effects of a school education according to Government pattern, have a very thorough knowledge of the living things of the "bush" and, with reason, pride themselves on this knowledge; also

(with the same reservation) they are good to the stranger within their gates. So, if a stranger asks questions about any creature supposed to inhabit the island, the person questioned is very apt to take it for granted that he must know more about it than his questioner does; while his sense of hospitality forbids a bald statement of ignorance. The result, though quite probably given in perfect good faith, may be worthy of an eastern dealer in "antiques."

It was on the 21st of January, 1914, that *Mimocichla* was seen at last, during the making of a new road through such a tangle of knife-edged coral-rock, swamp, and mangroves, with patches here and there of the poisonous manchineel tree and of climbing cactus, that at first it took more than two hours to cover a distance easily walked over in five minutes when the road was made. And it was in all probability the same individual which appeared at the same place on the 27th of January and the 10th of February, and on these occasions only, though the bird and its possible nest were looked for every day.

On its first appearance it stayed in full sight for some five to ten minutes in a tall mangrove bush close to the new clearing, and was singing. Its song was very subdued, recalling the warble of a Budgerigar. Its manners and general appearance, apart from its colour, were not unlike those of a blackbird, and the second time it showed itself it flew across the road, giving a "thrush" chatter as it flew. This, like its song, was only just audible. The last time it was seen, it was in the same bush as a Tyrant Flycatcher, which, as usual, was deeply interested in the work just being commenced on the road, and flew up to get a closer view. *Mimocichla*, on the contrary, dived at once into the depths of the mangroves and was seen no more. It obviously liked human society less the more it saw of it.

Holoquiscalus caymanensis differs from the bird last mentioned in being one of the few wild creatures which seem to be absolutely without any fear of man, and can be fairly described as being aggressively friendly. It is

common all over Grand Cayman, particularly among or near mangroves, where it has a way of proclaiming its presence by the curious ringing cry from which it gets its local name "Ching ching," and by coming nearer and nearer to the observer until it is on a branch close to his head, on the ground at his feet, or by no means infrequently on his outstretched foot if he is sitting still. From this point of vantage it repeats its cry two or three times as a sort of greeting, and then goes about its business.

It is a decidedly better "mocking bird" than *Mimus orpheus*, and can give a most realistic imitation of a frog (*Hyla septentrionalis*) caught by a snake, or perhaps by the bird itself, seeing that it is very fond of frogs as food, though it seems to be practically omnivorous.

During the winter months it flocks in large numbers, flying from place to place before roosting, just as the Common Starling does. This seems always to be among the mangrove woods, and it is said to nest in colonies in the most inaccessible parts of these, making an open nest of sticks and laying bluish eggs.

As well as those of *Catotrophorus semipalmatus* and *Sterna antillarum*, already mentioned, the writer has had under observation nests of the following Grand Cayman birds:—

<i>Colaptes gundlachi.</i>	<i>Melopyrrha taylori.</i>
<i>Mimus orpheus.</i>	<i>Euethia olivacea.</i>
<i>Vireosylva caymanensis.</i>	<i>Spindalis salvini.</i>
<i>Dendræca petechia auricapilla.</i>	<i>Cæreba sharpii.</i>
<i>Dendræca vitellina.</i>	

Colaptes gundlachi is one of the common birds of the island, and, as Mr. Lowe has observed ('Ibis,' 1911, p. 150), is very tame. There cannot be many places in which it is possible to watch a Woodpecker feeding within three feet of the observer, as unconcernedly as if it were a canary in a cage. Its breeding-season is July to August, and a very favourite site for its nest is the stem of a dead Thatch-palm (*Thrinax argentea*). The uppermost two or three feet of one of these, generally about five or six inches in diameter

and ten to twenty feet from the ground, decays rapidly inside, so that it becomes just a hard outer shell perhaps half an inch thick, enclosing what is little more than powder held together by a loose network of fibres and capped by the more lasting remains of the "crown" of the palm—an ideal situation for a woodpecker's nest, but impossible to examine except after complete destruction. The same hole seems to be used year after year if the palm-stem lasts, and in early August the young can generally be seen blocking the entrance with their heads, and heard, often with not more than two minutes' intervals, loudly welcoming the return of a parent with food.

Mimus orpheus in Grand Cayman builds an open nest of small sticks rather roughly put together and lined with grass, palm-fibre, and similar material, in a bush or tree at any height from about three to twenty or more feet above the ground. Three eggs are usually laid, and there can be little doubt that the heat of the sun assists in their hatching, seeing that during sunny weather the bird does not seem to sit regularly, if at all, and that the young more often than not seem to be hatched at intervals of a day, just as the eggs were laid. The period of incubation is eleven to twelve days, and the usual nesting season is from January to June, though the majority of nests seem to be made in April. *Mimus orpheus* will not allow any large bird to come within range of its nest unchallenged. One nesting near the beach would attack any Frigate-bird flying at all low overhead, and keep up the chase until well out to sea. This bird is locally called "Nightingale," and does occasionally sing at night, but most of the local accounts of the nocturnal music of "Nightingales" seem to have originated in the books (from England), by means of which the Cayman school-children are taught to read. Its song is very like that of *Turdus musicus*.

Vireosylva caymanensis is frequent in the "bush," and is very probably the real singer of the song attributed to *Melopyrrha taylori*. The two birds are often noticed not far apart. A nest was found, on the 27th of May, 1913,

suspended from a small branch about three feet from the ground. It was compactly woven of spider's web, palm-fibre, and similar material, the outside being finished off with some pieces of bark covered with lichen, and the remarkably deep cup being lined with fibre. The nest ended below in a point, recalling, though in a less pronounced manner, the pointed end of the Australian Fantail's nest. When found, the bird was sitting, though the two eggs were evidently lately laid. They were pink in colour, with very small round dark claret-coloured spots mostly around the large end. One egg was only slightly spotted. Both birds stayed close to the nest while it was being examined, flying from branch to branch. The one which had been sitting had a harsh scolding note, like a Whitethroat's; the other was silent. On the 8th of June the bird was still sitting, and was not disturbed. Presumably because of the depth of the nest, it was in a most constrained position, with its beak pointing vertically upwards. On the 12th of June there were young ones in the nest, which had the appearance of having been hatched about two days. They had greyish down, and the inside of their throats was yellow.

This was the only nest, old or new, of *Vireosylva caymanensis* found by the writer; it would seem that it cannot breed very freely in the north of Grand Cayman, which has such a comparatively dry climate, that nests often remain for years after they have been abandoned, without much alteration in appearance.

Dendroeca petechia auricapilla seems to breed much more commonly in this district than the last-mentioned bird, and its old nests are by no means infrequent in the "bush." It is locally known as the "Yellow bird." A newly built nest, found on the 20th of April, 1913, was made of dry "turtle grass" (*Thalassia*) and spider's web not very neatly put together, though the palm-fibre lining of the cup was well finished; it was in a bush of "button-wood" (*Conocarpus*) about five feet from the ground. Though there were no eggs until about ten days later, the birds

were very excited when the nest was approached. On the 4th of May there were two eggs which were still quite fresh. They were smaller than would have been expected from the size of the bird, and like heavily marked Greenfinch's eggs in colour. This nest, together with most of the nests made of "turtle grass" which are presumably those of this species, was in a locality several miles from any fresh water, even the dew being more or less briny, except when heavy rain has thoroughly washed the leaves and so removed the salt which the trade-wind brings in fine spray from the reef. So it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this *Dendroæca* must be able to satisfy its thirst from the sea, like *Fregata aquila*, which can often be seen, when the sea is smooth, drinking on the wing as a swallow does.

Dendroæca vitellina nested in the writer's garden (at Georgetown) in April and May, 1912. The first nest was about four feet from the ground in a *Ficus benjamina*, and was beautifully made of cotton-wool (*Gossypium*) from a bush growing close by, with a lining of feathers. When first found, on the 11th of April, it was apparently quite finished, but the bird continued to add feathers to the lining until the 20th or 21st, on which day the feather bed was level with the rim of the nest.

The first egg was laid at about 8 A.M. on the 22nd, and the second before 7 A.M. on the following day. They were large for the size of the bird, and in colour not unlike the grey-green type of the Red-backed Shrike's egg. On the 5th of May some enemy broke one of the eggs, and though the bird did not desert the survivor and hatched it on the following day, the young one, too, was taken on the 7th. Another nest, also made of cotton, was begun on the 8th of May in a low croton-bush less than two feet from the ground, but was not finished; and a third, not quite so full of feathers as the first, but otherwise like it, was found on the 11th about eight feet up in an orange-tree. On the 17th this nest had two eggs in it which differed somewhat in colour from those previously found. These had no suggestion of green in either ground-colour or markings,

the former being greyish-white, while the spots were grey and brown. As is the case with *Mimus orpheus*, and, it would seem, with other builders of open nests in Grand Cayman, this bird did not sit at all regularly during the hottest part of the day, until incubation was well advanced. The eggs were hatched on the 29th, but again the young ones disappeared when they were only a few days old.

Melopyrrha taylori is by no means a rare bird in the north of the island, where it is known as the "Black Sparrow" and has the reputation of being a songster, though whether it really sings the song attributed to it seems a little doubtful. As might be expected from its powerful beak, its food seems to consist largely of hard seeds, including those of *Thrinax argentea*, the "Thatch palm" of Grand Cayman, which are of a hardness almost stony. Its abandoned nests are not uncommon, but the writer never managed to see its eggs. They are said to be "like a Yellow bird's (*Dendroica petechia auricapilla*), but with very dark spots."

The nest is a covered one, rather large, and roughly made of fibre and grass, with an entrance high up at one end. Outwardly it is not unlike the nest of a branch-building House-Sparrow in appearance, but it has no lining. One of these nests, just built, was found on the 29th of December, 1912, about twelve feet from the ground in a slender bush. It was difficult to get at without damage being done which might make the birds desert it, but, as a road was near, this was not impossible, and it was examined on the 2nd, 9th, and 23rd of January, and was found to be empty on each occasion, though the birds were about, as they were on the 7th of February. Three months later, on the 16th of May, they were found to be feeding a brood of young ones, and on the 22nd these had flown.

Euethia olivacea seems to wander about Grand Cayman in small parties, staying for a few days wherever there happens to be grass with ripe seeds. A nest of this bird containing three eggs was found on the 18th of June, 1912, about a foot from the ground in a low bush. The nest was

domed, with the entrance at one side, and was lightly built of grass and fibre without any particular lining. The eggs were white with claret-brown spots and markings, mostly around the large end. They were hatched on the 26th, and had probably been incubated for some days when first found. This nest, until the bird was seen, was thought to belong to *Cœreba sharpii*, the eggs being almost identical with one type of that bird's; but the position of the nest so near the ground seemed unusual, and it was much less substantially built than the nest of *Cœreba sharpii* usually is.

Spindalis salvini is perhaps as common in the north of Grand Cayman as the Bullfinch is in southern England, and its abandoned nests, lightly built of palm-fibre and looking very like those of the Whitethroat, are frequently to be seen in the "bush."

Mr. Lowe, in his paper on "Birds collected during a Cruise in the Caribbean Sea" ('Ibis,' 1909, p. 346), states that the female of this species is undescribed. The plumage has none of the bright colouring of the male, being, except for the usual light and dark shading of the wing- and tail-feathers, and for a light streak over the eye, as uniformly brown as the fur of the common mouse—slightly darker on the back than underneath. The eyes, beak, legs, and feet are dark in colour, and it has just the smooth, neat appearance that is to be seen in *Ampelis*.

A nest of this species containing three eggs was found in a bush about nine feet from the ground on the 6th of May, 1913. The eggs in size and colour were not unlike the grey type of the Red-backed Shrike's, but with the addition of some claret-coloured spots. The birds were not at all noisy at the nest, and the hen, if she was sitting, sat lightly and moved off quietly when the nest was approached. She sat very little during the day, and the cock did not seem to sit at all.

The eggs, which were plainly visible from beneath through the flimsy structure of the nest, were hatched on the 16th of May, and on the 22nd the young birds were seen to have black skin and down, while the inside of their throats, well



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1. SPINDALIS BENEDICTI.
2. SPINDALIS PRETREI.
3. SPINDALIS SALVINI.